



Education revolution

FORGET ABOUT COMPUTERS IN SCHOOLS: THE REAL EDUCATION REVOLUTION IS ONE WHERE LEARNING IS NO LONGER EQUATED WITH SCHOOLING, SAYS **DAVID LOADER**.

As a young teacher, one of my memorable experiences was meeting a professor of Sociology, and a socialist, who to my horror said Australia needed a revolution. Back then, my change credo was incrementalism. I wonder whatever happened to that professor, and whether he's happy now that not one but many revolutions have eventuated.

No one doubts we are in the midst of an economic revolution – jobs are failing and savings are disappearing as we find ourselves to be part of a global system that is outside our control.

Then there's the knowledge revolution, produced by the rapid generation of, ease of access to and new shape of knowledge. Not surprisingly, we teachers are struggling to keep up with our professional reading. Much of what we learned at university in preparation for teaching is redundant and in some cases has to be unlearned.

A third revolution is in the social dimension. Authority is no longer based on status or age, but on relevance. In the classroom, this means that simply being in front of a class is not enough, the teacher must also be relevant and engaging. Family breakdowns, declining birth rates and rising standards of living mean that many young people have access to unprecedented levels of goods and services with mixed benefits; growing individualism and social fragmentation bring their own problems. Our model of education, depending as it does on deferred gratification, working hard now to get our rewards later, is increasingly unacceptable for young people who value now, not the future.

These revolutions have created the need for a fourth revolution, in education. This revolution is more than simply introducing computers into schools, replacing underperforming teachers, building modern

classrooms, introducing a national curriculum or replacing old textbooks. It needs to involve some deeper changes to learning and teaching.

We need an education revolution to enable learning to become part of our lifestyle. That means we need assessment not by way of an external exam but rather through evidence of coping with an increasingly complex world. Similarly we need a curriculum focused not on know-what, straightforward factual knowledge. The curriculum needs to be increasingly directed towards know-why, know-how and know-who; knowledge that will equip young people for rapid changes in job-related knowledge requirements, and greater complexity and diversity of pathways through adult life.

Given that we live in a knowledge society, schooling needs to equip students with the skills to discover, evaluate and manipulate new knowledge. Learners should be encouraged to publish their work and contributing to growing knowledge, and should be supported as peer teachers, not just seen as students. Instead of a teacher always posing problems, students themselves need to ask questions with teachers there to guide, support, model and teach in response to student questions.

Technology is continually evolving and so is the way students learn with this technology. New technology fosters different types of interactions and new means of learning. The impact of technology, the internet and the changing nature of students is making past teaching styles less effective. Learners expect to have personal learning pathways that reflect their different interests, aspirations and learning styles.

Given that knowledge is readily available from many sources, dependence on a

class and teacher is inappropriately inward-looking. If schools are to continue to be relevant, they need to build relationships with the broader community, where students' learning occurs more and more.

Future learning will be in communities, virtual and real, so students will need to acquire social skills, like the ability to collaborate and empathise, building emotional resilience to support their ability to learn with others.

Learning can no longer be equated with schooling, although schooling can be part of learning. The idea that education is simply a schooling system suggests that the best way to improve is through mass customisation, central targets and inspection regimes. Too many schools and classes are focused on control and management. It's possible to build a learning structure that assumes students are independent, resourceful and motivated learners. In such a structure, students would take responsibility for their learning, and peers and others in the community could be fully recognised as valid 'teachers.'

In thinking about that revolutionary professor, I realise now that I am a convert, that I too want revolution – an educational one – and that like all successful revolutions, it has to come from the people, not from our political masters.

So don't just be dragged into the education revolution, lead it. **T**

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